



Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

# BULLETIN

Editor: Annie Rushton [bul.editor@tasfielddnats.org.au](mailto:bul.editor@tasfielddnats.org.au)

Quarterly Bulletin

No 344

October 2011

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. People of any age and background are welcome as members.

For more information, visit website <http://www.tasfielddnats.org.au/>; email [info@tasfielddnats.org.au](mailto:info@tasfielddnats.org.au); write to GPO Box 68, Hobart, 7001; or phone our secretary on mobile 0418 942 781.

We welcome articles and interesting photos for the Bulletin. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please email the editor with your article or photos by 15 June.

Federation weekend at Murrayfield Station, Bruny Island .....	2
Celaenia excavate ( <i>C. kinbergii</i> ) .....	3
Tasmanian Museum Reference Collections .....	4

Sea rocket invasion of Tasmania: Can You Help ..	5
Mortimer Bay –4 September .....	7
Wanted House to Rent –Can You Help? .....	7

Program

**General Meetings** start at **7.15 pm** for 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania.

**Excursions** are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 9.00 am outside the Museum in Macquarie St, Hobart. Bring lunch and all-weather outdoor gear.

If you are planning to attend an outing, but have not been to the prior meeting, please confirm the details as late changes are sometimes made.

Thurs 6 Oct	<p><b>Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania.</b></p> <p><b>Liz Turner</b>, a long time TFNC member, as were her parents, will present '<b>Easter Camps as they were</b>'.</p>
Sun 8 Oct	<p><b>Excursion</b>, a short walk along the <b>Cascades Track</b>.</p> <p>Meet at <b>9.00am</b> at the beginning of the track in Old Farm Road behind the Cascades Brewery in South Hobart</p>
Fri 28 ~ Sun 30 Oct	<p><b>Federation weekend</b> hosted by TFNC at <b>Murrayfield</b> on Bruny Island.</p> <p>Murrayfield is a large indigenously owned farm property managed to preserve important cultural and environmental sites.</p> <p>For information about this get-together of field naturalists from all over Tasmania, or to book visit the website at <a href="http://www.tasfielddnats.org.au/">http://www.tasfielddnats.org.au/</a></p>
Thu 3 Nov	<p><b>Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania.</b></p> <p>Our guest speaker will be <b>Darren Cullen</b> informing us about '<b>Venezuelan Carnivorous Plants</b>'.</p>
Sun 6 Nov	<p><b>Excursion</b> with Darren Cullen to <b>Scotts Peak</b> in SW Tasmania, where there are carnivorous plants, though presumably not Venezuelan. Arrangements TBA</p>

<b>Thu 2 Dec</b>	<b>Meeting 7.15pm in Life Sciences building, University of Tasmania.</b> This is <i>Members' Night</i> at which members are invited to give short presentations on any experiences or topics of interest to Field-Nats.
<b>Sun 4 Dec</b>	<b>Xmas BBQ.</b> Morning walk on the Pelverata Track followed by a relaxed barbeque at Pelverata. Arrangements yet to be finalised.
For details of talks and excursions beyond this date, please check the website at <a href="http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/">http://www.tasfieldnats.org.au/</a>	

## Federation weekend at Murrayfield Station, Bruny Island

**Friday 28th October ~ Sunday 30th October**

**Michael Driessen**

**T**FNCF is hosting the next annual get-together of the *Federation of Field Naturalists Clubs in Tasmania*. It is a rare opportunity to visit an interesting part of Bruny Island in the company of a wide range of naturalists.

### About Murrayfield

Murrayfield is a 4097 ha property on Bruny Island owned by the Indigenous Land Corporation and managed in partnership with the Weetapotah Aboriginal Corporation.

The property aims to balance the demands of running an established sheep and fine merino wool business with the protection of cultural and environmental sites.

Murrayfield has a rich and varied landscape with significant habitat for rare and threatened species, including the swift parrot, white-bellied sea eagle, wedge-tailed eagle, and the forty-spotted pardalote. It has a rich Indigenous cultural landscape. More information about the station is available at <http://www.murrayfield.com.au/>.

### Accommodation

Accommodation sleeps 24.

Tent sites are available

Maximum numbers: 50.

Cost: \$10/adult/night

There are twelve rooms with single beds and six rooms with bunk-beds for two people. There is the possibility that people can sleep on the floor in the bedrooms to increase capacity. The station includes a large living area, large kitchen with fridge and freezer, cooking and eating utensils, BBQ, toilets and showers.

### Draft Itinerary

<b>Friday afternoon</b>	Arrive
<b>Friday dinner</b>	BYO dinner and refreshments
<b>Friday evening</b>	Welcome to country (TBA) and talk
<b>Saturday</b>	Drive to church ruins and walk to Cape Queen Elizabeth
<b>Saturday dinner</b>	BBQ provided by TFNC (BYO refreshments)
<b>Saturday evening</b>	Guest speaker (TBA)
<b>Sunday morning</b>	TBA

### To Attend

Book with Michael Driessen:

Email: [president@tasfieldnats.org.au](mailto:president@tasfieldnats.org.au)

Phone: (03) 6229 6382.

Please advise if you need a room or can camp if a room is not available.

Regarding the Saturday evening barbeque: if you have special dietary requirements, please let us know ahead for catering purposes, or alternatively bring appropriate food.

### Bruny Island Ferry Timetable

Timetable and fares available from the website  
<http://www.brunyisland.com/island/ferry.php>.

We suggest avoiding the last ferry on Friday as it may be busy.

## Celaenia excavate (*C. kinbergii*) Family Araneidae

Amanda Thompson

Most commonly known as the Bird Dropping Spider, but also known as the Orchard Spider, Death's Head Spider or Bird Dung Spider, I first noticed a collection of brown balls strung together in my garden at Taroona many years ago. Wondering what they were, I took them to the museum and Liz Turner identified them for me.

Many years later when volunteering at the museum, Liz gave me a female and her egg sacs to look after. I photographed them and watched them to see what the spider ate and hopefully to see the spiderlings hatch!



*Celaenia excavata* taken before I released her into the garden. Photo Amanda Thompson

I would go out often, at all times of the day and night and she'd be there motionless with her egg sacs. If prodded, she gave no retaliation. I even caught her moths to eat, later finding out that they appear to feed only on the one species *Spodoptera mauritia*, the 'lawn armyworm' an agricultural pest.



This photo shows 2 brown, striped egg sacs woven together with silk. They are being guarded by the large female *Celaenia excavata*, her legs tightly wrapped under her. Photo courtesy [www.brisbaneinsects.com](http://www.brisbaneinsects.com)

This genus is said not to make webs, though some report the young making webs.

Females are considerably larger at 12-14 mm while the little known males are only 2 mm! She takes a long time to make up to 13 egg sacs, each containing up to 200 eggs. These egg sacs upon which she sits motionless, are strung together with silk, and hung in a bush/tree about a meter from the ground.

At night the female hunts male moths which she entraps by emitting a pheromone mimicking female moths (*Spodoptera mauritia*, or army worm...) which she captures with strong, spiny forelegs.



*Spodoptera mauritia* (Lawn army worm). Photo Amanda Thompson

With the aid of a torch to focus and a detached flash, I did manage to get a photo of her with a self-caught moth one night.



*Celaenia excavata* with self-caught moth. Photo Amanda Thompson

Then, one day she disappeared. After waiting for weeks or months I found the egg sacs had been parasitized by wasps who drill tiny holes into them.

---

## Tasmanian Museum Reference Collections –10th July 2011

### Don Hird

On a rather bleak July day this excursion was well scheduled with an inside location. Around fifteen Field Nats gathered at Rosny Park for a guided tour of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery's reference collection, transferred here in recent years from its previous home in the basement of the museum in the city. First our guide Cathy Young showed us her personal specialisation, geometrid moths from

W.A. and their preparation to a stage where many individual specimens can be visually compared in cases. It was also pointed out that finer detail such as genitalia need to be compared to accurately identify some species.

Fastidious preparation and association of other information with collected specimens is integral to the science of taxonomy.



*Drawers containing birds' eggs. Photo Amanda Thompson*



*Sea spiders (pycnogonads) . Photo Amanda Thompson*

Next we were shown the “wet” preparation area where such specimens as vertebrates are prepared for their ultimate collection, for example, skins and skulls.

In recent years, some collections have changed their emphasis. For example, marine vertebrates from Antarctica have become important acquisitions.

We were also shown some deepwater antarctic sea-spiders which dwarf their local inshore relatives.

The importance of museum collections as repositories for *type specimens*, the sample from

which an initial species description is made, was explained.

While many of these are held in the Tasmanian Museum there are also many Tasmanian type specimens held in England and France dating back to early colonial times. Such valuables are kept in ultra-secure storage.

As well as the emphasis on scientific specimens, other specimens include hunters' big-game trophies and decoratively mounted animals such as hummingbirds, dating back to a time when fashions and ethics differed from those of today.



Bones, bones & more bones....Photo Amanda Thompson



Stuffed birds Photo Amanda Thompson



*Phaneroptinae, tettigoniidae katydid.* Photo Amanda Thompson



What a beauty! Photo Amanda Thompson

There are also extensive zoological collections, some collected by our forerunners (early TFNC members), some in elaborate cabinets. We

wondered whether lost species like the Tasmanian emu may have been amongst them.

We thanked Cathy and TMAG for an informative short excursion.

## Sea rocket invasion of Tasmania: Can You Help?

**Roger Cousens**

**T**wo sea rockets (*Cakile* spp., Brassicaceae) have invaded Australia. *C. edentula* (from eastern N. America) was first collected from Victoria in 1863.

Over about 60 years it spread west as far as Eucla, and up to sub-tropical Queensland.

*C. maritima* (from Europe) arrived in WA by 1897. From there it reached SA and Vic by the 1920s, NSW by the 1960s and since 2000 there have been records from southern Queensland.

As *C. maritima* spread, *C. edentula* disappeared. There is some conjecture about whether *maritima* out-competed *edentula*, whether they have hybridised, or whether *edentula* was more susceptible to a disease (*Alternaria bassicola*).



Examining sea rocket. Photo R. Cousens

Or perhaps there are other reasons, such as climate change.

Whether there has been single or multiple introductions of either species is also unclear at this stage. Sara Ohadi, at the University of Melbourne, is looking at their population genetics

to try to reconstruct the biology of what took place.

In Tasmania, *C. edentula* was first collected in 1875 ("near Circular Head") and has been recorded sporadically around the State's coasts.

*C. maritima* was first collected in 1963 (at Sullivan's Cove) and is now widespread.

We know that both species are still present in Tasmania: colleagues have sent us seeds of *C. edentula* from Kingston this year.



*C. edentula*

*C. maritima*

But will *C. maritima* go on to completely replace *C. edentula*, as it has done on mainland Australia (with the exception of northern NSW/southern QLD) and as happened in California and the North Island of New Zealand? Or will they co-exist, either on the same beaches or in slightly different habitats? This is a wonderful opportunity to observe invasions/extinctions in action. The trouble is, I live in Victoria!

In trying to reconstruct invasion histories, we tend to rely on herbaria. Although herbarium specimens give a very broad indication of distributions, they are very patchy in coverage, both in time and space. What is the current situation in Tasmania?

There are only seven herbarium specimens of *C. edentula* since 2000. Is it still widespread, but no one has looked carefully? Is it hanging on by a thread? Sara and I would appreciate your help, both to help bring the information up to date and to help future collecting trips.

If you are on the beach, could you let us know which species you find (photos of the fruits would be fantastic) and where? Or if you were near the most recent records for *edentula*: Bruny Island, Orford, Spiky Beach (S. of Swansea), Ulverstone, Marrawah and Strahan (Ocean Beach), could you take a look?

Flowering/fruiting is most common from November to March, based on herbarium collections. On mainland Australia, sea rockets occur just above the highest tides, at the base of the fore-dunes, and only a couple of metres into the dune vegetation. They have fleshy green leaves that range from entire margins to pinnate. Petal shape and size vary between species, but the best characteristic for the beginner is the shape of the fruit.

Fruits have two sections, one above the other, but sometimes only the upper one develops. Look for fruits in which both sections have developed. In *edentula*, the top section is almost globular (except towards the top), narrowing to a tight waist where it joins the lower section.

In *maritima*, the top section is more elongated and the top of the lower pod section is distinctly triangular at the zone between the two sections (though there is quite a lot of variation).

Although only *maritima* has pinnate leaves, both species can have leaves with shallow lobes or none at all.

If you are able to help, you can contact me, Roger Cousens, at [rcousens@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:rcousens@unimelb.edu.au) Ph 03 83449749, or Dept of Resource Management & Geography, University of Melbourne, Vic 3010.

---

## Mortimer Bay –4 September

Kevin Bonham

Doing some pre-trip reading I learned that Mortimer Bay near Sandford is a "very low energy" beach. It is, in fact, so low-energy that a tall gum tree grows to the water's edge, and a couple of campers (with a rather high-energy rottweiler in car) had pitched a tent across it.

We walked down the beach a short distance, then into the eucalypt scrub on the low dunes and down a track parallel to the beach through more dry woodland, open areas and the edge of a pine plantation.

Following lunch near the end of the beach we returned via the beach. A couple of brief showers were accompanied by dramatic skies that tested memories of the week's cloud talk, but the rest of the day was fine.

An early find was a small colony of the orchid *Pterostylis concinna* with flowers of varying sizes. Many *Corybas* leaves were also seen but it was not until the return walk that three very nice *C. incurvus* were found still in flower.

The track briefly headed through a patch of low marshland, and in this area several live amber snails (*Succinea australis*) were found by various Field Nats (the children especially). This snail, usually found in marshes and coastal fringes, is quite common but is rarely seen alive.

Other native snails found included *Caryodes dufrenoyi* (often small in dry/coastal areas but at just 19 mm, these are among the smallest adults I

have seen), *Pernagera officieri* and *Laomavix collisi*. There were many introduced snails and slugs including *Paralaoma servilis* (probably ex-NZ) and *Prietocella barbara*, *Microxeromagna armillata*, *Oxychilus cellarius*, *Arion intermedius*, *Lehmanna nyctelia* and a juvenile *Deroceras* sp. (all ex-Europe).

There was lots of log-rolling in the areas behind the beach, and this activity produced a few froglets and brown tree frogs, one of the latter posing charismatically for photos in its crack in the log. A large huntsman was also seen but a far greater hazard for those venturing off-track was the plant *Cynoglossum australe*. Apparently I got off lightly compared to those whose hairy legs were in the firing line, but my jumper still hasn't entirely recovered from the onslaught of this spuriously threatened-listed burr factory!

Around our lunch site large click beetles (mostly black with a purplish sheen, but including a few smaller species) were flying in numbers. As we walked up the beach we followed a number of nervous oystercatchers until the birds eventually realised that they had wings and didn't have to walk the full distance to stay away from us, and I also saw a spotted pardalote collecting nest materials in a shrub at a distance of only five metres.

Our thanks to Mark Wapstra for leading an excellent and well attended day.

---

## Wanted House to Rent –Can You Help?

My name is Zoe Burton and I am a Victorian Field Naturalist member based in Melbourne. I was a Tasmanian Field Naturalist as a child in Hobart.

My family and I are planning to come to Hobart at Christmas time and we were wanting to stay in a holiday house near the south/east coast for a week. I was wondering if your members knew of anywhere we could stay.

We can pay the going rate for the week. There are 4 adults and 6 children and if a property had some land some of us could camp. My number is 0434 384 401. Our dates are flexible, but close to Christmas would be preferable.

Thanks very much.

